

THE PUGET SOUND CORRIDOR FOREST LEGACY AREA

The Department of Natural Resources surveyed representatives of Native American tribes and tribal organizations, county governments, natural resource agencies, environmental organizations, land trust organizations, industrial and non-industrial forest landowners about their preferred focus for a Washington State Forest Legacy Program. Survey results guided the State Stewardship Coordinating Committee to recommend the following Forest Legacy Area:

Proposed Forest Legacy Area

All privately owned forested land within Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce and Thurston Counties, bounded by the northern edge of the Stillaquamish watershed, the southern edge of the Nisqually watershed, to Puget Sound or the western county boundaries, and east to the designated long-term commercial resource lands, as defined by each county in compliance with the Growth Management Act (Revised Code of Washington Chapter 36.70A).

All five counties within these boundaries are currently planning under the Growth Management Act. Each county has designated urban growth areas and resource lands of long-term commercial significance. The proposed Puget Sound Corridor Forest Legacy Area is located in the rural area between these designated lands. This is the area most threatened by conversion to non-forest use.

Coordinating the Forest Legacy Area boundaries with Growth Management boundaries helps assure that requirements of the Growth Management Act and Forest Legacy Program, as well as local community economic growth and resource conservation goals, are coordinated and met.

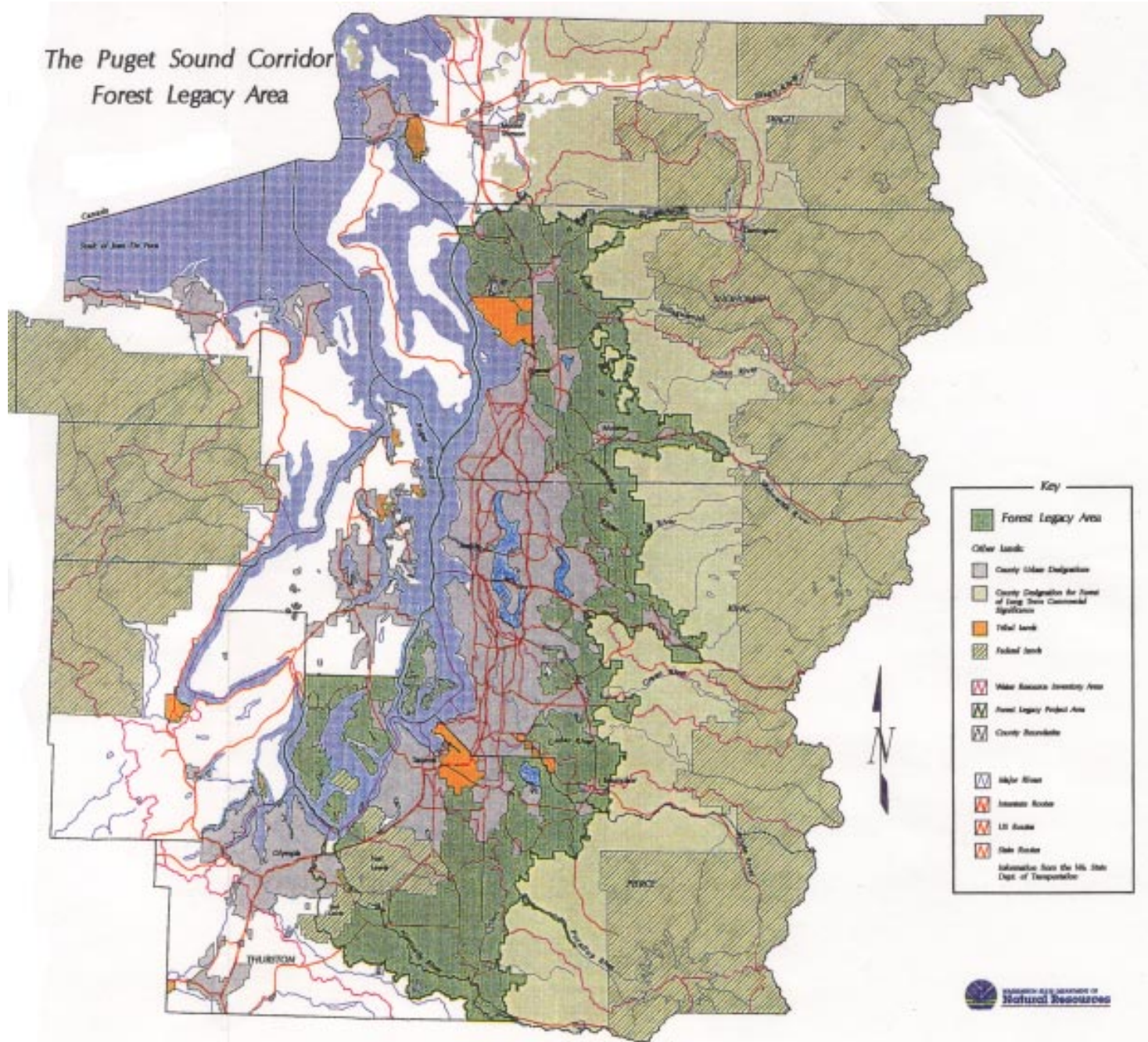
Notes:

Land within planned urban growth areas is not eligible for the Forest Legacy Program. Therefore, urban growth areas are excluded from the Puget Sound Corridor Forest Legacy Area. Forest lands may be designated by local governments within urban areas only if they also provide a program for the purchase or transfer of development rights. It is assumed therefore, that conservation of forest lands within urban areas will be achieved by local governments in compliment to the Forest Legacy Program.

Designated resource lands of long-term commercial significance are also not eligible for the Forest Legacy Program, as current zoning provides some protection for these lands from widespread conversion to non-forest uses.

Department of Natural Resources Water Resource Inventory Data will be used to mark the northern and southern boundaries (Stillaquamish and Nisqually River watersheds).

The Puget Sound Corridor Forest Legacy Area



Forest Legacy Area Description

Refer to boundary description (page 14) and map (page 15).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PUGET SOUND CORRIDOR FOREST:

The Puget Sound Corridor forest is part of the extensive western hemlock, Douglas fir forest of Western Washington. Nationally recognized for its timber production, the forest also is a vital component of the hydrologic cycle that supports the Puget Sound ecosystem – a unique and unparalleled resource. Seven forested watersheds within this area drain into the Sound. Many wildlife species within the area require both marine and upland habitats at different times in their life cycles – including several runs of salmon that are listed in depressed or critical status, and the Marbled murrelet (a threatened species).

The Puget Sound Corridor Forest Legacy Area is located east of the Seattle, Everett and Tacoma metropolitan complex, the state's most populated area. Historically, this lowland forest provided recreational opportunities, fish/wildlife habitat, wood products for national and international markets and associated employment. Those values remain important today. More than one-half billion board feet of timber was harvested in 1991 from private lands within or surrounding this area. The traditional rural quality of life is disappearing as a growing population chases lower cost housing and a slower pace of living, leaving a wake of development and only remnants of the plants, animals and resource based communities that once existed there.

By the year 2010, it is estimated that the population in the Puget Sound region will increase by 1.2 million people, nearly 40 percent over the 1989 population. The exploding population poses an immediate threat of permanently converting this area to non-forest uses. As this growth occurs, water quality problems associated with development will continue to mount, and vital habitat for forest wildlife will be lost forever. Within the Puget Sound Corridor, Forest Legacy in conjunction with other state and local land protection programs, will help maintain a buffer of small privately owned farms and woodlands between lands designated as long-term industrial forest lands and one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND HOW THEY WILL BE PROTECTED AND CONSERVED:

The highly productive forests of the Puget Sound region continue to provide a number of traditional forest resources. The combined total of timber harvested from King, Snohomish and Pierce counties in 1991, was three-quarters of a billion board feet. Of this, nearly 600 million board feet came from private forest lands. Timber related jobs are an important factor to the local economy in towns throughout the west cascades and Puget lowlands.

Land conversion in this area is unprecedented. This area reports the largest number of timber harvest permit applications that include conversion to non-forest use. According to the Seattle-King County Land Trust Statement of Purpose (May 1992), "While the last two decades have seen the Puget Sound's population grow by 36 percent, the amount of its lands covered by development has increased by over 87 percent." Time is truly of the essence in considering protection of private forest lands in this area.

The rivers and tributaries that flow through the proposed Legacy Area and into Puget Sound provide vital habitat for several runs of salmon and steelhead trout listed in a depressed or critical status. Protecting water quality in these river basins will increase their chance of survival and contribute to the economic health of those people (commercial, treaty, and sport) that are dependent on a healthy fishery. Water quality is of utmost importance to the many private residents whose water supplies are located within this area. A conservation easement on lands within the Forest Legacy Area should include development rights and any other rights required to conserve the watersheds and quality of water emanating from them.

The Department of Wildlife estimates that up to 70 terrestrial species plus all the anadromous fish species (salmon, steelhead trout, smelt, shad and sturgeon) rely on both the marine waters of the Sound and terrestrial habitats (usually upland (streamside) riparian corridors). Many species of wildlife that are listed as rare by the Department of Wildlife are believed to occur in the Puget Sound Corridor Forest Legacy Area. This includes the federally listed Bald eagle, Northern goshawk, Marbled murrelet, and Spotted owl. Protecting critical habitat is considered of utmost importance in preventing the future listing of fish runs within the Area. Conservation easements that provide critical habitat for rare wildlife or plant species may need to include some timber rights.

Purchase of conservation easements is expected to be the primary mechanism used to protect the important environmental values and public benefits of a potential Forest Legacy parcel. It will be important to purchase development rights in all cases. Other rights that may be needed for protection of important values include:

- possible timber rights, if necessary for purposes such as protecting habitat for rare species, or to provide extra riparian protection
- possible mineral rights
- possible acquisition of rights to protect water quality

LIST OF PUBLIC BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED:

- Protection and conservation of water quality
- Protection and conservation of fish and other wildlife habitat
- Protection and conservation of rare plants,
as listed by the Washington Natural Heritage Program
- Maintaining present and future timber supply
- Water quality protection within Native American usual and accustomed use areas

IDENTIFICATION OF GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY OR ENTITIES THAT MAY BE ASSIGNED MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY:

- State Department of Natural Resources
- State Department of Fish and Wildlife (presently separate agencies, but will merge in 1994)
- County government

DOCUMENTATION OF THE ANALYSIS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS:

Discussions of the Forest Legacy Program have occurred with the following groups and public officials:

Washington Environmental Council
Snohomish Land Trust
Snohomish County Planner
The Trust for Public Lands
The Northwest Land Trust Council
The Mountains to Sound Greenway
City of Issaquah
Issaquah Alps Trail Club
King County Parks and Planning
Bellevue Parks and Recreation
City of Seattle
Skagit County Planner
Skagit Watershed Planner
Plum Creek Timber Company
Weyerhaeuser Company
Pierce County Farm Forestry Association
Upper Puget Sound Farm Forestry Association
Tulalip Tribe
Pacific Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
Muckleshoot Tribe

Public support for a Forest Legacy Program in this area is demonstrated by the following actions:

The Trust For Public Land and Mountains to Sound Greenway are raising money to preserve the scenic beauty along the areas major east-west freeway.

Seven local land trusts are organized in the proposed Forest Legacy Area.

The State of Washington has made numerous acquisitions of natural resource lands for preservation of special plant species, or conservation of important scenic and ecological areas for low-impact recreation and wildlife habitat values in this region, including:

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|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Pilchuck, Snohomish County | 6,802 acres |
| Greider Ridge, Snohomish County | 5,469 acres |
| Morning Star, Snohomish County | 7,837 acres |
| Snoqualmie Bog | 79 acres |
| Mount Si, King County | 4,741 acres |
| West Tiger, King County | 854 acres |
| Kings Lake Bog, King County | 309 acres |

The Nisqually River Council is actively working to preserve the integrity of the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge.

Watershed Action Plans to address water quality issues have been completed for four watersheds within the area.

Public announcements:

A press release was issued to all daily and weekly newspapers in the proposed Forest Legacy Area. All radio and television stations were also contacted.

Interview about the program aired on KGY radio, Olympia, 9/15/93

Forest Legacy Program questionnaires were sent to Native American tribes, county planners and representative groups of industrial and non-industrial private forest landowners, environmental groups and land trust organizations in the area, 8/20/93

This proposed Forest Legacy Area meets the eligibility criteria for the Forest Legacy Program as follows:

Forests are threatened by immediate and future conversion to non-forest development.

Area boundaries are consistent with local land use plans (as required by the State Growth Management Act) by excluding urban growth areas.

Seven major watersheds provide important habitat for wildlife and plant communities -- several rare plants and animals, or depressed runs of salmon occur within the boundaries.

The area provides vital timber management opportunities. It will be possible to carefully manage under a Forest Stewardship Plan, while protecting water quality and habitat.